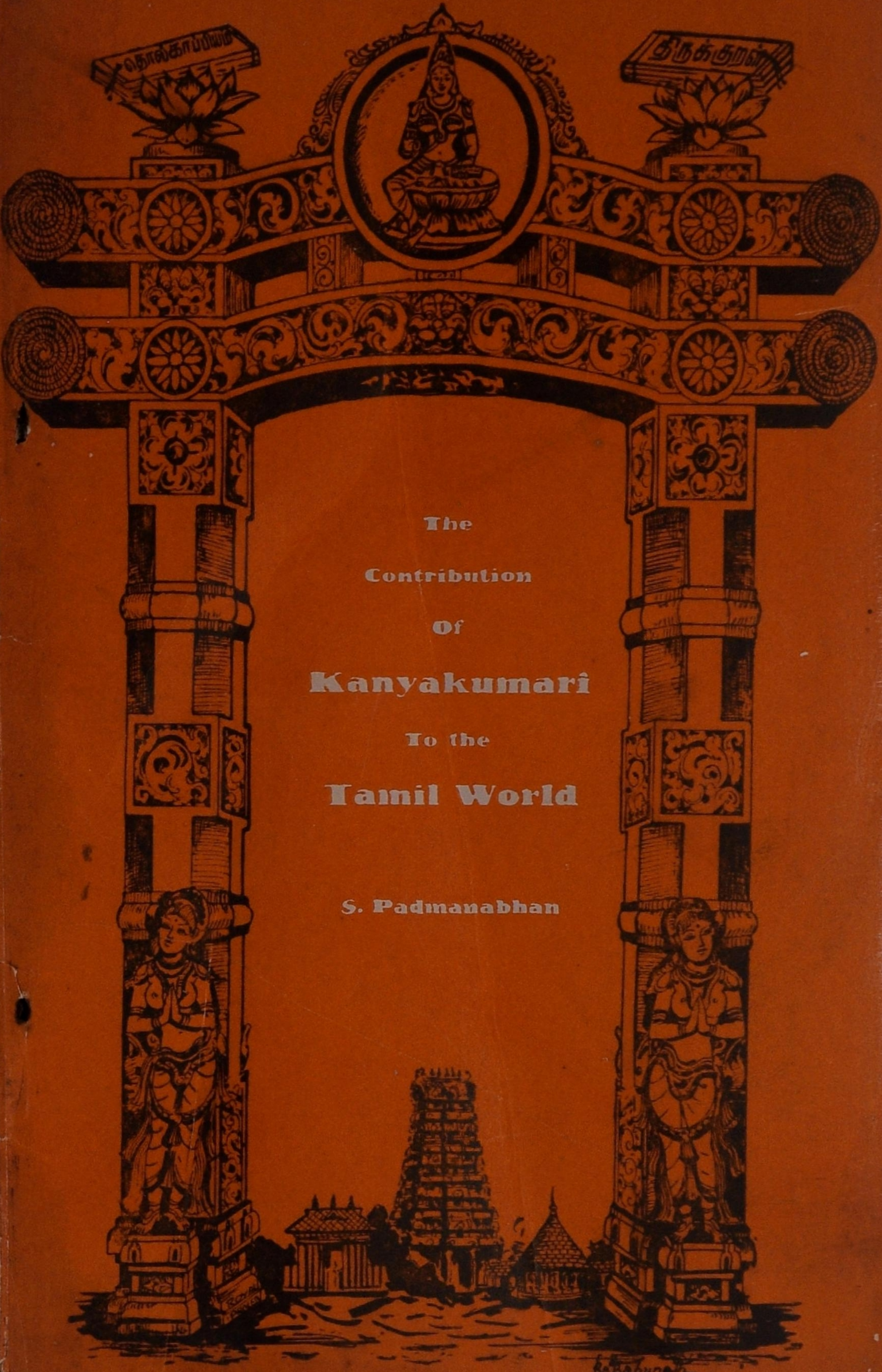


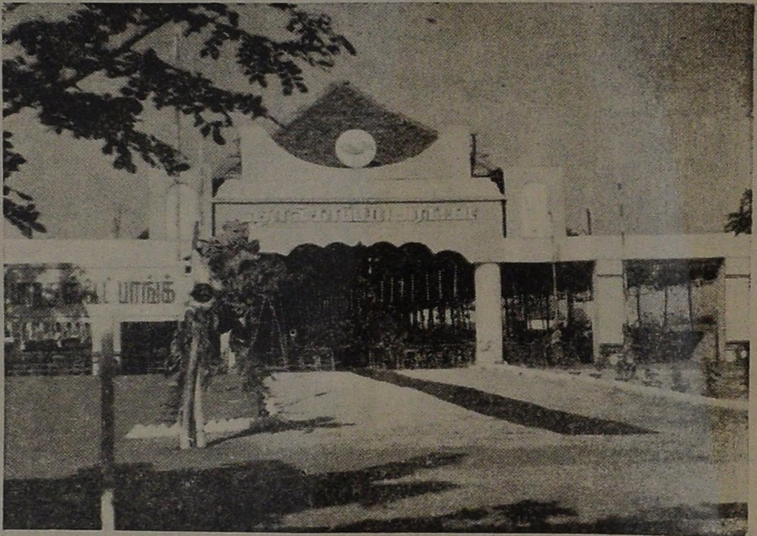

# The Contribution Of Kanyakumari To the Tamil World

S. Padmanabhan

"எத்திசையும் புகழ் மணக்க இருந்த பெரும் தமிழணங்கு"

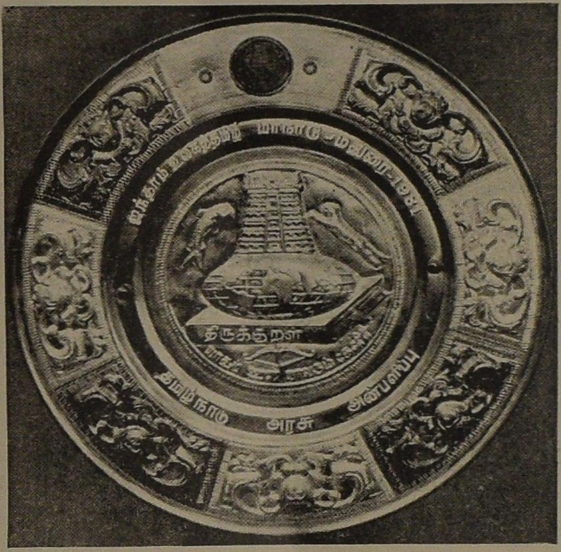
"MOTHER TAMIL, WHOSE FAME SPREAD ALL OVER THE WORLD"

ENTRANCE TO THE V INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE—
SEMINAR OF TAMIL STUDIES

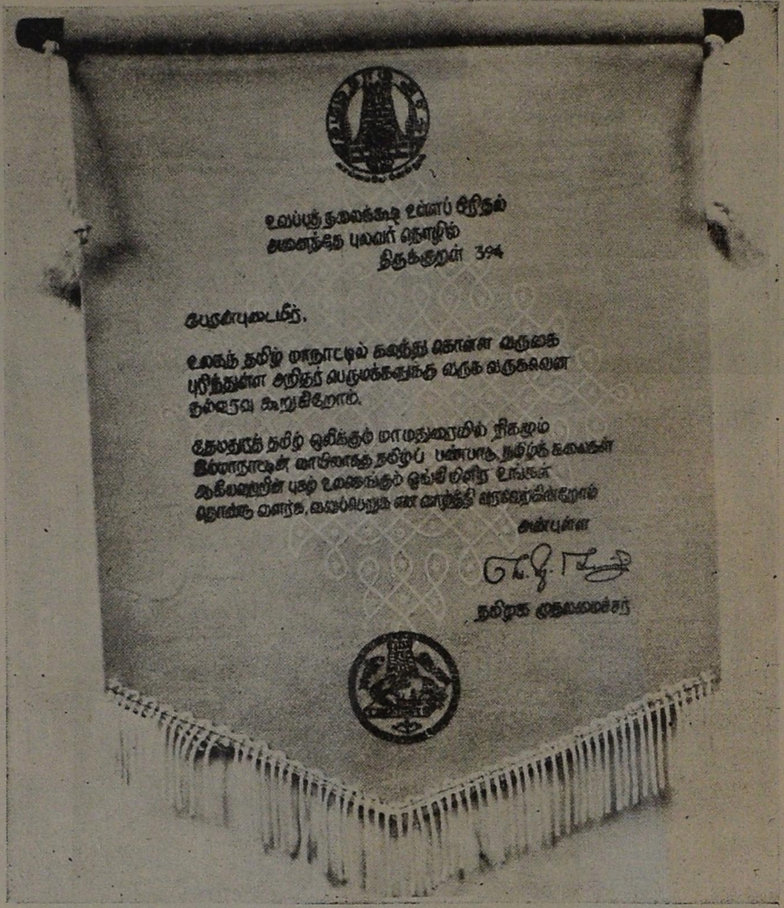


"THOLKAAPPIYAR ARANGAM" WHERE THE RESEARCH
PAPERS WERE PRESENTED

THE EMBLEM OF THE SEMINAR




THE ARTISTIC DISC (Thanjavur Thattu)
PRESENTED TO THE AUTHOR BY THE
GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU



உவப்பத் தலைக்கூடி உள்ளப் பிரிதல்
அனைத்தே புலவர் தொழில்
திருக்குறள் 394

பெருமையுடையீர்,

உலகத் தமிழ் மாநாட்டில் கலந்து கொள்ள வருகை புரிந்துள்ள அறிஞர் பெருமக்களுக்கு வருக வருகவென நல்வரவு கூறுகிறோம்.

தெய்வத் தமிழ் ஒலிக்கும் மாமதுரையில் நிகழும் இம்மாநாட்டின் வாயிலாகத் தமிழ்ப் பண்பாடு, தமிழ்க் கலைகள் ஆகியவற்றின் புகழ் உலகெங்கும் ஓங்கி மிளிர உங்கள் தொண்டு சிறக்க, [illegible] என வாழ்த்தி வரவேற்கின்றோம்

அன்புள்ள

தமிழக முதலமைச்சர்

**THE ADDRESS OF WELCOME SIGNED BY Mr. M.G. RAMACHANDRAN, THE CHIEF MINISTER OF TAMIL NADU**

# The Contribution of Kanyakumari to the Tamil World

(An expanded version of the Research paper presented in the V International Conference—Seminar of Tamil Studies held at Madurai between 5th and 10th January, 1981)

S. PADMANABHAN

**KUMARAN PATHIPPAGAM,**
20, STATE BANK COLONY,
**NAGERCOIL-629 001.**

**1981**

# The Contribution of Kanyakumari to the Tamil World

(A Research paper on the literary and cultural history of Kanyakumari)

*By*
**S. Padmanabhan,**
Journalist,
Nagercoil-629 001.

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Nagercoil.

# V WORLD TAMIL CONFERENCE

The dream of the Tamils and of Madurai was realised when the Fifth World Tamil Conference was held at Madurai between 4th and 10th January, 1981 with pomp and pageantry. The inaugural and valedictory addresses were delivered by Mr. Sadiq Ali, the Governor of Tamil Nadu and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India respectively under the Chairmanship of Mr. M. G. Ramachandran, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu at "Tiruvalluvar Arangam" in the Race Course Stadium.

The multi-coloured flags with the emblem of the conference, the festoons and welcome arches in the thoroughfares and the names given to the venues of different events held and the permanent decorative archways and the statues of the Tamil Savants erected in connection with the conference recapture the glorious past of Tamil language and culture. The atmosphere in the city on all the seven days of the conference made one see "Tamil everywhere and Tamil in everything."

## SEMINAR OF TAMIL STUDIES

In sharp contrast to the pomp and pageantry of the city, the International Conference—Seminar of Tamil studies under the auspices of the International Association for Tamil Research was inaugurated in scholarly simplicity in the sylvan setting of the Madurai—Kamaraj University campus at 9 A.M. on 5th January, 1981. Dr. Justice S. Maharajan, the Chairman of the Seminar welcomed the delegates and Mr. A. Subbiah, the founder—member of the I.A.T.R. delivered the inaugural address.

Nearly forty Research papers were presented every day on all aspects of Tamil language, literature and culture including linguistics by the Tamil scholars of the World. More than 500 delegates from different countries participated in the Seminar. UNESCO had sent a delegation to the conference.

The morning plenary sessions were held in a huge decorated thatched hall named "Tholkaappiyar Arangam" in the campus of the University and the afternoon Seminar sessions were held section-

wise in 13 halls of the University buildings. The subjects were classified into 16 sections.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF KANYAKUMARI TO THE TAMIL WORLD

In the planetorium hall, under Miscellaneous section Mr. S. Padmanabhan presented his Research paper "The contribution of Kanyakumari to the Tamil World" under the chairmanship of Mr. V. Thillainayagam, Director of Public Libraries at 3.45 P.M. on 9—1—1981. The other papers on the day under this section were "Tamil manuscripts in Europe" by Mr. K. Damodaran and "Tamil Library Resources in Great Britain" by Dr. Albertine Gaur.

At the request of several scholars the paper "The contribution of Kanyakumari to the Tamil World" has been elaborated with a few additional facts and brought between stiff boards here.

His Holiness

## Sri-la-Sri Arunagirinatha Sri Gnanasambanda Desika Paramachariya Swamigal

# BLESSINGS

"The Contribution of Kanyakumari to the Tamil World" has proved worthy of the occasion. Thiru S. Padmanabhan, the author of this book which was rendered as a lecture in the Fifth International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies, charms himself into the position of a "true chronicler" by appealing to the specialists mind engressed in ancient Tamil History, Architecture of South Indian Temples and even Geography. He has done a good service for his native land.

Though the book is in a limited number of pages, it covers in them some of the most intimate and interesting politics-historical aspects of Tamil Nadu dating back to Tholkaappiyar (pp.7-8) and earlier Lemuria. A fairly complete record of the glories of Nanchil Nadu makes up half of the book, thereby showing itself as a most valuable hunting-ground that ever was presented to the students of Tamil History.

The author's research seems to have been drawn up, the details of which he himself has left to us in this book, after learning much partly from vast treatises and partly from his own observations. We have all the new informations filled in on politics, social questions and modern literature ranging over the entire district of Kanyakumari.

We should be glad if this book is used by the public and the learned Tamil Society more than as mere index. May every one be pleased to have known such a reputed scholar amidst our community.

May Lord Meenakshisundaresa Peruman bless his unique offerings in Tamil with a positive welcome.

Madurai Aadheenam,
March 23, 1981.

*Sri Gnanasambanda Desikar*

**Professor K. Kailasapathy,**
M. A. (Cey.) Ph.D. (Birm)
Dean, Faculty of Arts,
*University of Jaffna,*
JAFFNA,
SRI LANKA.

March 18, 1981,

# FOREWORD

It is amazing how little is known about the various districts of Tamilnadu by the Tamils themselves. This is particularly true of the history and traditions of those districts that are in the periphery. Kanyakumari is one such district about which there is so much to know and so very little is known. It is true that Kanyakumari has long been known as a sacred place for pilgrimage and in recent times has become a favourite spot for tourists—both Indians and foreigners. However, the contribution of the district to Tamil literature and culture has not yet received the proper attention of the scholars. Some significant work has of course been done on the temples in the district and in dialectal studies. But much of the local history and culture has not been covered by historians and literary scholars.

In modern times Nanjilnad has been brought into the mainstream of Tamil literature by poets like Sundaram Pillai and Desikavinayakam Pillai and novelists like Sunderaramasamy and Neela Padmanabhan. These writers have made a unique contribution to Tamil literature by bringing to bear on it their understanding and appreciation of Malayalam language and literature. Their translations and original works have a distinct quality that is at once exotic and enriching. Perhaps the temperament of the artists and writers of Nanjilnad has been conditioned by its history that has not only seen fiery conflicts but also fecund confluences. Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity have each made their own impact on the life and traditions of the people of the district with extra-ordinary results.

Shri. S. Padmanabhan is an amateur who has for many years concerned himself with the local history of Kanyakumari district. He has published several booklets and monographs that satisfy a felt need. In fact Shri. Padmanabhan has, by his dedication and persistance, emerged as the sole historian of that district. His *The Forgotten History of the Land's End* primarily dealt with the religious history of the area, while *In and Around Kanyakumari* served as a general guide book to important places in the district. In his present work *The Contribution of Kanyakumari to the Tamil World* he has focussed attention on the literary history of the district. As an amateur writer and a free-lance journalist Shri. Padmanabhan does not always adhere to the rigour and strictness of the meticulous scholar. However his earnestness and enthusiasm compensate for any such indiscretion.

As a Sri Lankan, I find many facts about Kanyakumari District very interesting, since I suspect that there must have been close connections between Sri Lanka and that part of South India, including Kerala: place names, dialectal similarities, customs and food habits seem to indicate such a connection. This merits a separate study.

I have seen many of the publications of Shri. Padmanabhan and feel that they do perform a useful function. The present book is an extension of the Author's interest and is wholly welcome. He has carried out his task within the modest limits he has set himself. His effort deserves commendation and support. I wish him success in his future endeavours.

*K. Kailasapathy.*

# PREFACE

"The field of research is neither Czardom nor a Sultanate. It is a republic where even the humblest day—labourer has a duty to perform and a right to express his views." These are the opening words of "Kaandalur Saalai" written by Kavimony Desikavinayagam Pillai. The words of Kavimony have given me enthusiasm and strength to work in the direction of unfolding the historical facts about Kanyakumari which were forgotten or purposely buried under the oblivion of time.

My interest in research started with my school days when I wrote an article on "Tamil and Malayalam" which was appreciated by Kavimony, when I first met him on 15th July, 1948. The article has appeared in "Tamil Naadu" of Madurai and subsequently in "Tamil Murasu" of Singapore and "Vidhuthalai" of Periyaar E.V.R. On the advise of Kavimony I have gathered the unknown facts about Kanyakumari and brought them to the lime light by contributing articles to the various journals and News papers. The articles were subsequently collected and published in the form of books. They are "Temples in Kanyakumari District", "Forts in Kanyakumari", "Historic Churches in Kanyakumari", and "The Forgotten History of the Land's End."

This book is also a part of my research work on Kanyakumari. It is an expanded version of my paper presented in the V International Conference—Seminar of Tamil Studies which was held at Madurai between 5th and 10th January, 1981. It deals with the literary and cultural history of Kanyakumari in a nut-shell. In this book the ancient literary—history of Kanyakumari may be considered as a Research work while the modern period is just a cursory survey.

I extend my hearty thanks to the organisers of the International Conference—Seminar of Tamil Studies for the opportunity given to me to present the facts about Kanyakumari which I have gathered from different sources and the results I have arrived at therefrom, before the scholars of the world for their considered views.

I am much grateful to Dr. K. Kailasapathy of Sri Lanka for writing a valuable Foreword to this book, in spite of the fact that he

has always been hard pressed for time. By lending reference books and scrutinising the typed script my friends Professor N. Mahalingam, Prof. S. Nagarajan and Prof. M. Sankar of S. T. Hindu College, Nagercoil and Prof. N. S. Indran of Anna College, Aramboly have helped me immensely. I do not find words to express my gratitude to these real friends. I extend my hearty thanks to Dr. R. S. Pillai for his valuable suggestions on the paper.

I must also thank M/s. Pioneer Muthu Printing House, Nagercoil for the speedy and excellent execution of this work. My anxiety to bring the book in time, however accounts for the none-too many lapses that appear in the Errata list of the following page.

20, State Bank Colony,
Nagercoil-629 001.
13th April, 1981.

S. Padmanabhan

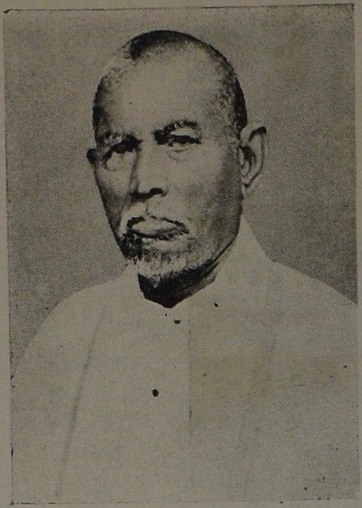
# ERRATA

| Page | Line | For | Read |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3 | lotus filled | lotus-filled |
| 1 | 26 | Vel | Velh |
| 2 | 1 | Vel | Velh |
| 2 | 21 | Kanyaukmari | Kanyakumari |
| 4 | 3 | frame work | framework |
| 5 | 5 | Silapathikkaaram | Silapathikaaram |
| 9 | Foot note | போதாய் | போதார் |
| 12 | 7 | stain | stained |
| 12 | 8 | sea-port | seaport |
| 18 | 26 | that the | the |
| 20 | 26 | 1142 | 1942 |
| 23 | 22 | books | works |
| 23 | 24 | the | a |
| 23 | 27 | has founded | founded |
| 24 | 29 | pharse | phrase |
| 24 | 34 | for | to |
| 28 | 28 | into | of |
| 29 | 16 | have been | have |
| 29 | 22 | was | were |
| 31 | 10 | has served | served |
| 33 | 18 | have imparted | imparted |
| 35 | 23 | feats | arts |
| 35 | 24 | karathe | karate |
| 36 | 11 | fotfication | fortification |

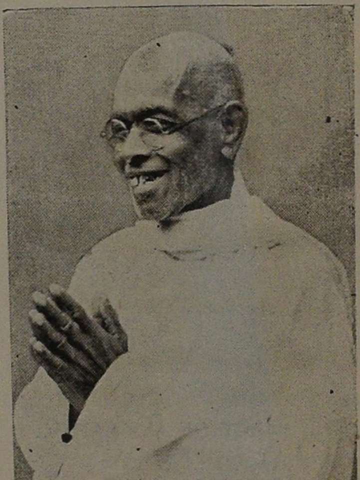
SUCHINDRUM TEMPLE,
A STORE—HOUSE OF SCULPTURES

THE IMAGE OF AVVAAIYAR
AT MUPPANDAL

THE IMAGE OF NAMMALWAR
AT TIRUPPATHISAARAM



SADAAVADAANI PAAVALAR



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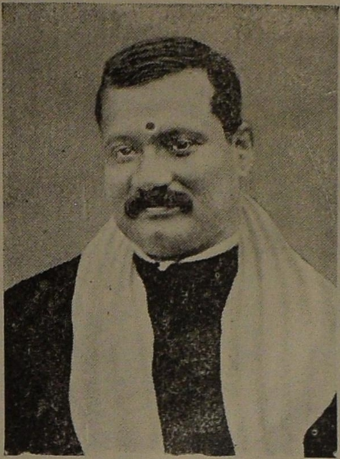
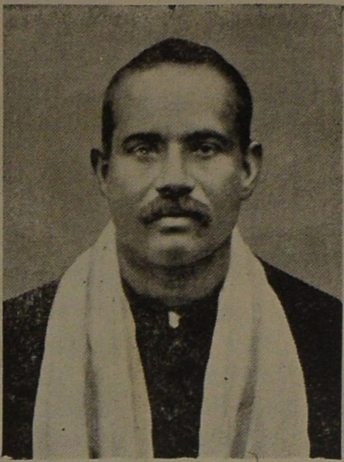
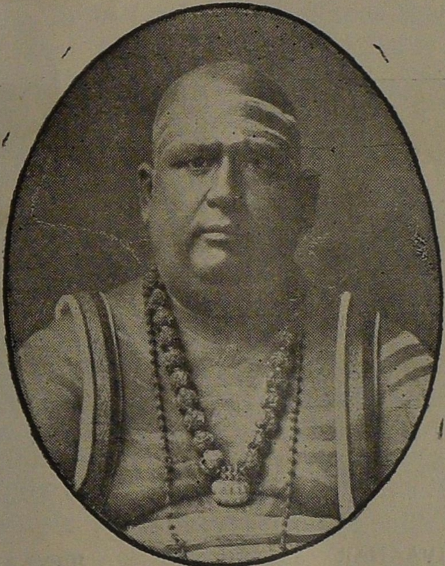


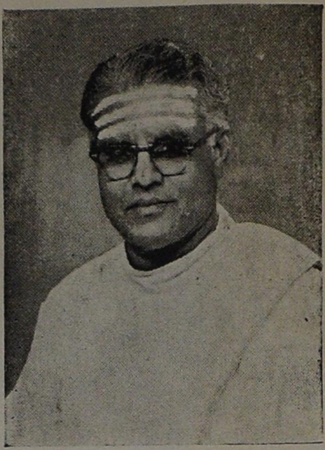
K. N, SIVARAJA PILLAI



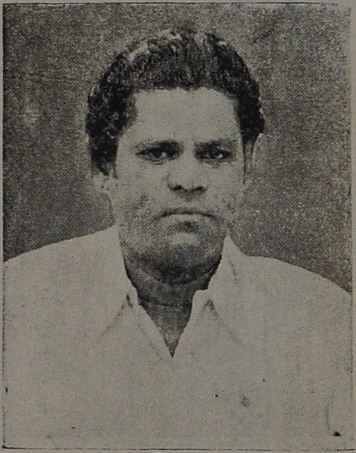
K. N. KUMARESA PILLAI



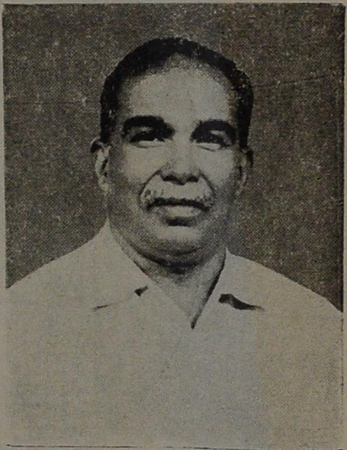
THONDARKULAM ARUMUGHA NAAVALAR



AVVAI T. K. SHANMUGHAM



KALAIVAANAR



JEEVAA

# The Contribution of Kanyakumari to the Tamil World

Kanyakumari is the southern most district of our Motherland. The Western Ghats ending into green hills, perennial rivers, lotus filled tanks, dense forests, extensive paddy fields, rich coconut groves and the carved coastal line are the unique natural features of the Land's End promontory of India. According to Tholkaappiyam the land is divided into four regions named Mullai (pastoral), Kurinji (mountainous), Marutham (agricultural) and Neythal (maritime) and therefore the land is called Naanilam or the land of four kinds. The land of all the four kinds can be seen in Kanyakumari District. In some places they are interspersed with one another. This feature is known as Thinaimayakkam in Tholkaappiyam.

From the literature and inscriptions we find that the district of Kanyakumari comprised several ancient territorial units of Tamil Naadu known as Naanjil naadu, Venaadu, Purathayanaadu, Kurunaadu, Padappaanaadu Tenganaadu, Mudaalanaadu and Valluva naadu. Among them Naanjilnaadu and Venaadu were most famous. Puranaanuru gives a fine description of Naanjilnaadu in several poems.[1] Even now the taluks of Agastheeswaram and Thovaalai of Kanyakumari District are known as Naanjilnaadu. Venaadu was the nucleus of Travancore State. The word Venaadu is derived from the words Vel and Naadu, Vel and Aay refer to the same people. It is very clear from Puranaanuru

1. புறம். 137—140, 380

that Vel was the family name of the Aays.[1] The land of Aay is described in Puranaanuru[2] and Ahanaanuru[3]. Puranaanuru mentions that Aay owns Pothiyamalai. The hill Kavaram mentioned in Ahanaanuru is but Kavaramalai near Velimalai in Kanyakumari District. Ptolemy says that Kottiara, the present Kottar was the metropolis of the Aay country. In the district there are several places of great antiquity, historical significance, literary importance and architectural value. All these features and phenomena have combined to create a unique place for the small district in the map of the Tamil World.

Geographically Kanyakumari is significant, for, it marks the confluence of the three oceans, the Bay of Bengal. the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. Culturally the district of Kanyakumari is rich, because it accommodates the different faiths in her bosom. Politically it was "a cock-pit" of the south, for it was a battle-field of several kingdoms like Chera, Chola Paandya and Aay rulers. In the field of literature the contribution of Kanyaukmari is unique. The poets and scholars of Kanyakumari District have made a substantial contribution to the richness and variety of Tamil literary heritage from very hoary times to the modern period.

---

1. மாரியன்ன வண்மைத் தேர்வேள் ஆயைக் காணிய சென்மே!
   புறம் — 133
   மலைகெழு நாடன்! மாவேள் ஆஅய்!
   புறம் — 135

2. கழல் தொடி ஆஅய் மழை தவழ் பொதியில்
   புறம் — 128
   வடதிசையதுவே வான் தோய் இமையம்; தென்திசை ஆஅய் குடி
   இன்றாயின், பிறழ்வது மன்னோ இம்மலர்தலை உலகே
   புறம் — 132

3. ஆஅய் நல் நாட்டு அணங்குடைச் சிலம்பிற், கவிரம் பெயரிய உருகெழு
   கவாஅன், ஏர் மலர் நிறை சுனை உறையும், சூர்மகள் மாதோ
   என்னும் — என்நெஞ்சே
   அகம்—198

Every part of the Tamil land has made its significant contribution to the Tamil World. But the contribution of Kanyakumari is unknown to outsiders except a few. Prior to the linguistic reorganisation of the states in 1956 the present district of Kanyakumari was a part of the former Travancore State whose official language was Malayalam. So the history of Kanyakumari has not been carefully dealt with by the historians of Tamil Naadu. Nanjilnaadu, the nucleus of Kanyakumari District has all the time constituted a distinctly separate unit socially and culturally different from the rest of Travancore So the historians of Travancore have not accorded the due place for Nanjilnaadu in early history.[1] Thus the history of Nanjilnaadu was ignored by the historians of Tamil Naadu and of Kerala. In the literary field also the history of Kanyakumari has not been carefully dealt with.

We have very few books on the history of Kanyakumari but we have an abundance of materials which bring new data to light in rewriting the history of Kanyakumari District and its contribution to the world. In Kanyakumari no attempt has been made so far in the field of excavation and underwater Archaeology. We may know something more of the ancient history of Kanyakumari and its contribution to the world if places like Tiruvithaankodu and Muttam are excavated by the Department of Archaeology. Tiruvithaankodu was once the capital and Venaadu. It is of interest to know the fact that several foreign coins were found at Muttam which was once a leading port and a famous centre of foreign trade. A careful and impartial study of the materials found at these places undoubtedly gives new findings.

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1, The Early History of Nanchinad Dr. K. K.Pillay Page, 4

My paper "The Contribution of Kanyakumari to the Tamil World" is not a detailed survey but only a frame work of the ancient history of Kanyakumari and its contribution to the Tamil World. Here Tamil World means Tamil language, literature and culture.

The Lemurian theory which holds the view that there was a large mass of land to the south of Kanyakumari carries the history of Kanyakumari District to very ancient times. The land of Kanyakumari District was once a part of the lost Lemuria or Kumari Kandam. The Paraliaaru now known as Palayaaru in the district of Kanyakumari is but Pahruli river in the lost Lemuria. Shenbagaraman pallu and Nanjil Venba corroborate the view[1] From the poetic inscriptions found in the Pandyan Dam on the river Palayaaru, the dam is mentioned as Paraliyatru Anai.[2] After the construction of the dam near Bhuthapaandi in the Kollam year 920 (1745 A. D.) the new branch of the river has been called Puthanaaru and the old river came to be known as Palayaaru[3]. (In Malayalam Puthen means new).

The submersion of the old river Pahruli and Kumari Kodu surrounded by a row of mountains under the sea is mentioned in Silapathikaram.[4] The district of Kanyakumari consists of numerous places ending in Kodu such as Kattimaankodu, Tiruvithaankodu, Tiruvidaikodu, Paakodu, Idaikodu, Devikodu, Vellikodu etc.

---

1. பறளியாறு பெருகிவர பான்மை பாரும்
பள்ளீரே —செண்பகராமன் பள்ளு

சங்கநூல் செப்பும் தனிப் பஃறுளியாறே
துங்கமிகத்தங்கும் பறளியாய் — பொங்கும்
பழயாருய் வந்து பரந்த தென்ப பாலே
தழைபாருய் சார் கழனி தா ஆய் —நாஞ்சில் வெண்பா

2. Kerala Society papers. Volume I page 263

3. Travancore Land Revenue Manual Volume IV page 98

4. பஃறுளியாற்றுடன் பன்மலையடுக்கத்துக்
குமரிக்கோடும் கொடுங் கடல்கொள்ள —சிலப்பதிகாரம் 11, 19–20

Kumarikodu also falls in the line. Presumably it was a big city surrounded by a row of mountains in the lost continent.

Adiyaarkkunallar, the commentator of Silapathi-kkaaram gives a fine description of Kumarinaadu and a list of Tamil works which were in the land. The land was made up of seven regions divided into seven divisions. The divisions named Thenganaadu and Kurumpanai naadu were in the area now known as Kanyakumari District. Thengaapattinam and Kurumpanai probably their capitals are also in the same district. A copper plate which belongs to the eighth year of the Aay king Varaguna mentioned the name Thenganaadu Kilavan.[1] So the District of Kanyakumari may be considered as the remnant of the lost Lemuria or Kumari Kandam swallowed by the sea.

If the Lemurian theory is true and if the Sanghams of the Tamils were actually held in the lost continent of Kumari certainly the history of the language, literature, and culture of the Tamils should commence from the remnant part of Kumari Kandam i.e. from Kanyakumari. It is very interesting to note that the very word KUMARI like our TAMIL contains the hard consonant, nasal consonant and middle consonant respectively.

## AGASTHIYAR

There is literary evidence to show that the first and second Tamil Sanghams were held at South Madurai and Kapaadapuram respectively in the lost continent of Kumari.[2] Among the 549 scholars in the first Sangham

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1. "தெங்கநாடு கிழவன்" – Travancore Archaeological Series Volume V Page 17

2. இறையனார் களவியலுரை

Agasthiyar was prominent. His work Agasthiam was the authoritative grammar of the first Sangham period. The life of Agasthiyar was closely associated with Kanyakumari.

In the course of instructions to the search-parties sent by Sugriva for finding out Sita, a minute geographical description of South India is given to Anjaneya in the Ramayana of Valmiki. In this occurs a reference to the Malaya mountain otherwise known as Pothigai hill as the seat of Saint Agasthiyar[1]. It is interesting to note that Kanyakumari District is protected by the Pothigai hill otherwise known as Agasthiyar Koodam. It is a prmoinent peak over 6200 feet above the sea level.[2] From the Ramayana of Kambar we learn that Sugriva directed Anjeneya to proceed to Lanka leaving the Pothigai hill to his left.[3] The poem further confirms the view that Anjaneya proceeded to Lanka touching the places in Kanyakumari. The Pothigai hill, Porunai river and Mahendragiri are all in the present district of Kanyakumari. Valmiki describes

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1. வால்மீகி இராமாயணம், கிஷ்கிந்த காண்டம்

சருக்கம் 41 வரி 15—17

2. An observatory was built here by Mr. Brown with the help of the then Government of Travancore in 1854 and it collapsed in 1865.

3. தென்தமிழ் நாட்டு அகன் பொதியில் திருமுனிவன்
தமிழ்ச் சங்கம் சேர்கிற்றிரேல்
என்றும் அவன் உறைவிடமாம் ஆதலினுன்
அம்மலையை இடத்திட்டு ஏகிப்
பொன் திணிந்த புனல் பெருகும் பொருநை எனும்
திருநதி பின்பு ஒழிய, நாகக்
கன்று வளர் தடஞ்சாரல் மயேந்திரமா
நெடுவரையும் கடலும், காண்டிர்

— கம்பராமாயணம்
கிட்கிந்த காண்டம்
நாடவிட்டபடலம் (4583)

Thampiraparani river as an abode of crocodiles.[1] From the local people of Vilavankodu taluk it is learnt that the river Thampiraparani was having crocodiles in plenty even 50 years ago.[2] Anjaneya used the same route when he brought Sanjivi hill from the Himalayas to Lanka. According to the local tradition of Kanyakumari Marunthuvaalmalai is only a chip which fell down from the Sanjivi hill. The district has a village, a taluk and several temples in the name of the Sage Agasthiyar. The names Agasthiyar and Agasthilingam are very common in certain areas of the District. Even the ladies bear the name Agasthi.

## THOLKAAPPIYAR

Tholkaappiyar is considered to be the chief disciple of Agasthiyar. Tholkaappiyam which appeared during the period of the second Sangham is the only work which escaped from the Deluge, since the author of the work belonged to the area which was not swallowed by the sea, i.e the present Kanyakumari District.

It is said by Panampaaranaar in his introductory verse that Tholkaappiyam was brought before the learned assembly in the court of Nilan Tharu Thiruvin Paandyan under the Chairmanship of Athankottu Aasaan for criticism and approval. It is interesting to note that Athankodu is a village in the Vilavankodu taluk of Kanyakumari District and Kaappikkaadu is a village near Athankodu. The word Kaappikaadu is derived from Kaappiyakudi, which means the domicile of Tholkaappiyar. The word "Kappiyakudi"

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1. வால்மீகி இர்ராமாயணம் — கிஷ்கிந்த காண்டம்
சருக்கம் 41 வரி 17

2. This fact was gathered by me when I went to the villages in Vilavankodu taluk along with Prof. G. Devadasan of Christian College, Marthandam.

is mentioned in Silapathikaaram[1]. It is also an important fact that Athankodu and Kaappikkaadu are situated on either side of the river Thampiraparani. No doubt Athankottu Aasaan and the author of Tholkaappiyam were the natives of Kanyakumari. A large number of palm leaf manuscripts on various branches of knowledge are still available in and around Athankodu.

The words like "Aham" (inside) and "Thathai" (parrot) and the euphonic increment 'Atthu' used in Tholkappiyam are in vogue only in Kanyakumari District and its neighbouring State Kerala which was once a part of ancient Tamil Nadu. Aavani which is the first Tamil month of the year according to Tholkaappiyam is observed as such by the people of Kanyakumari. The word Aasaan which denotes an authority in literature, medicine, Astrology, Mantra, Silampam etc. is used in the same sense only in Kanyakumari District even today. Like Athankottu Aasaan the masters of different fields are even now called after their places of domicile. For example Kaattukkadai Aasaan, Olaikodu Aasaan and Melkodu Aasaan. It is also interesting to note that there is a village named Panampalanji near Athankodu. It might be the domicile of Panampaaranaar who gave a preface to Tholkaappiyam. Tradition says that both Athankottu Aasaan and Panampaaranaar along with Tholkaappiyar were the students of Agasthiyar.

Hence we can boldly say that the district of Kanyakumari is the remnant of the lost continent of Kumari or Lumuria, the cradle of human race and the author of Tholkaappiyam, the greatest, grandest and the most ancient grammatical work in Tamil literature hails from Kanyakumari, the ancient piece of land.

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1. "காப்பியத்தொல்குடிக் கவின் பெற வளர்ந்து"

சிலப்பதிகாரம் 30, 83.

## TIRUVALLUVAR

You will wonder to hear the fact that Tiruvalluvar was born in the holy district of Kanyakumari. The word Valluva denotes the family name of the author and the term Kural signifies the metre of the poem he used. The very name of Vilavankodu in Kanyakumari District is said to have been derived from Valluvankodu.

Regarding the birth place of Tiruvalluvar there is one tradition that it was Mylapore which has a shrine of Tiruvalluva Naayanaar. Some scholars say on the strength of a stanza in Tiruvalluvamaalai that it was Madurai. But there is substantial evidence to show that the birth place of Tiruvalluvar was Tirunaayanarkurichi near Muttam in Kanyakumari district. The stanza in Tiruvalluvamaalai says that "Tiruvalluvar is the pivot of Punalkoodal while Krishna is pivot of North Madurai.[1] Here Punalkoodal is taken as Madurai. But it is not correct. The river Vaigai only flows at Madurai. There is no confluence of rivers here. Koodal and Naanmaadakoodal are other names for Madurai. There is no evidence to show that Punalkodal is Madurai. It is proper to say that Punalkoodal is Kanyakumari which is not only the meeting place of land and sea but also the confluence of the three oceans the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean besides the river Palayaaru, the remnant of the old Pahruhli river. The confluence of the the three oceans and the river Pahruhli is also mentioned in Puranaanuru.[2] Mathura in the North and Kanyakumari in the South were the two reputed centres of

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1. உப்பக்க நோக்கி உபதேசி தோள் மணந்தான்
உத்தா மாமதுரைக்கச் சென்ப இப்பக்கம்
மாதாநு பங்கி மறுவில் புலச் செந்நாப்
போதாய் புனற் கூடற் கச்சு —திருவள்ளுவமாலை பாடல் 21

2. முந்நீர் விழவி னெடியோன், தன்னீர் பஃறுளி மணலினும் பலவே
—புறம் 9

Pilgrimage in the prehistoric India. The two theerthas were also very familiar not only to the pilgrims of India but also to the early traders and travellers of other countries.

In his autobiography Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer writes that "Tirukkural was released at Perungkulam in Tirunelveli District in the assembly of the Paandya King Ugra Peruvaluthi in the immediate presence of 49 scholors".[1] There is also a reference of the release of Tirukkural before the King Valuthi in Tiruvalluvamaalai.[2] Professor S. Vaiyapuri Pillai confirms that Tiruvalluvar and Ugra Peruvaluthi were contemporaries.[3] Perungkulam is situated very near to Korkai, the ancient capital of Pandya Naadu. From the inscriptions found in the temples at Srivaikundam near Perungkulam we learn that the area was a part of Valuthinaadu.[4] There is also a village known as Valuthinaattaarvilai near Perungkulam. From these facts it can be surmised that Valluvar belongs to Kanyakumari near Perungkulam where his noble work was released. The words "Attam" (last)[5] and "Orthu" (think)[6] appearing in Tirukkural are used as such only in Kanyakumari District.

Puranaanuru says that Naanjil Naadu was ruled by one Naanjil Porunan who has been praised by the Sangham poets Oru Chirai Periyanaar, Maruthan Ilanaaganaar, Avvaiyaar and Karuvur Kada Pillai. The commentator of Puranaanuru describes Porunan as Naanjil Valluvan. Karuvur Kada Pillai remarks

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1. என் சரிதம் பக்கம் 992
2. கூர் வேல் வழுதி மனமகிழ தெய்வத் திருவள்ளுவர்
—திருவள்ளுவமாலை — 19
3. Preface to Tirikadugam and Sirupanchamulam Published by the University of Madras.
4. South Indian Inscriptions Volume V Nos. 736-742
5. விளக்கற்றம் பார்க்கும் இருளே போல் —குறள். 1186
6. ஓர்த்துள்ளம் உள்ளது உணரின் —குறள் 357

that Valluvan was a chieftain under the Paandya King. There is no doubt that Naanjil Valluvan and *Tiruvalluvar were in the same genealogical line.*

Valluvanaadu was adjascent to Naanjilnaadu and it was ruled by a Chieftain Valluvan who happened to be a poet of genius. One of the inscriptions belonging to the 18th year of the great Chola King Raja Raja I found in the rock-cut-cave temple at Tirunandikkarai records the gift of the village of Muttam in *Valluvanaadu* to the temple of Tirunandikkarai and the name of the village has been altered to Mummudi Cholanallur.[1] In all probability Tirunaayanaar-kurichi near Muttam which was in Valluvanaadu was the birth place of Tiruvalluvar.

Presumably the Chieftain Valluvan like Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavira one day renounced the world and entered the literary field as a sort of penance. The renunciation transformed the royal personage into a spiritual thinker, a great reformer and one of the greatest philosophers that the world has ever known. With the rich experience gained during his royal career he wrote the chapters on Love and Political economy with a surety of touch and unmatched skill After completing his triple treatise on Morality Material prosperity and Love in 133 chapters of ten couplets each, Tiruvalluvar went to Mylapore after releasing his work at Perungkulam. It is the custom of our Tamil Naadu to erect a temple in memory of a greatman at the place where he died. In Mylapore Tiruvalluvar was enshrined. So we can say that Tiruvalluvar was born at Tirunaayanaarkurichi and died at Mylapore. In the South there is a place after the name of Tiruvalluvanaayanaar and in Mylapore

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1. "வள்ளுவ நாட்டு முட்டம் என்னும்
பேர் தவிர்த்து மும்முடி சோழ
நல்லூர் என்று பேராக்கி" —Travancore Archaeological Series Volume I page 292

is the shrine of Tiruvalluvar locally called "Naayanaar-koil".[1] Thus Tiruvalluvar connects the South and the North of Tamil Naadu by his birth and death.

Tirunaayanarkurichi is situated on the bank of the river Valliyaru. There is an ancient temple of Siva known as Karaikandeswarar ie the Lord with a stain throat. Near Tirunaayanaarkurichi is Kadigai-pattinam, an ancient sea-port well-known even during the period of Raja Raja I. In one of the unpublished Mudaliar documents Kadigai pattinam is mentioned as "Peria piratti Chathurvedimangalam." A vatteluthu inscription of Raja Raja I in his 27th year is found in the temple at Kadigai pattinam.[2] From these facts we can surmise that Tirunaayanaarkurichi was well-known upto the period of Raja Raja I.

## AVVAIYAAR

Now let us come to Avvaiyaar. Among the the women poets of Sangham period Avvaiyaar is of course the foremost. She belongs to Naanjilnaadu. Unlike in other parts of Tamil Naadu there are three shrines of Avvaiyaar in Kanyakumari District. Few studies have been made of the origin and history of the rare shrines dedicated to Avvaiyaar. They are also unknown to the Tamil World.[3] In Puranaanuru Avvaiyaar gives a fine description of Naanjil Naadu and its ruler who was a patron of poets.[4] From her verses we learn that Naanjil Valluvan gave her

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1. திருவள்ளுவர் வாழ்த்தும் ஆதி பகவன்—ஜீவபந்து ஸ்ரீ பால்

2. T. A. S. Volume VI page 145.

3. I understand from Sri. S. Padmanabhan of Nagercoil that there are three shrines dedicated to Avvai in Kanyakumari District. This may be read as a foot note to my statement in the first chapter that there are no shrines dedicated to Avvai.

—Rajaji in his article on Avvaiyaar (Swarajya dated 7—2—1970).

4. புறம் 140

an elephant in memory of her visit to his royal residence.

In Thovaalai Taluk of Kanyakumari District the worship of Avvai locally known as "Avvai viratham" has been common. All Tuesdays during the Tamil month of Aadi are considered to be most auspicious for the worship of Avvai. Kool (gruel) and Kolukkattai (boiled cake of rice) are offered to her with reverence. It is very peculiar that the viratha is exclusively for women members. The male members are prohibited to take part in the viratha. It is strictly private and confidential for women members.

Kurathiyarai near Alagiapaandipuram has a rock-cut-cave temple locally called Avvaiaarammankoil. In the inscription and Palm Leaf records Alagiapaandipuram is mentioned as Adiganur.[1] The close relationship between Avvaiyaar and Adigan is well-known. It is important to note that Elini Aathan in whose honour Mankudikilar has composed a verse was ruling Thiruvattar in Kanyakumari District.[2] The term Elini is a Chera name found attached to the Kings of the Adigaman branch of Cheras who ruled Thakadur.[3] Adigamaan Nedumaan Anchi himself bore the name Elini.[4] The proximity of the shrine dedicated to Avvaiyaar and the place in the name of Adigan is an important fact to be noted here. Consequent upon the domination of the Paandya Kingdom over this area Adiganur was renamed as Alagiapaandipuram.[5]

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1. "அதிகன் ஊரான அழகிய பாண்டிபுரம்"
   T. A. S. Volume I Page 4
   T. A. S. Vo ume III Page 57
2. "வளநீர் வாட்டாற்று எழினியாதன்"—புறம்—396
3. The Early History of Nanchinad
   —Dr K. K Pillay, Page 10.
4. புறம் 230,392
5. The chronology of EarlyTamils
   —K. N. Sivaraja Pillai Page 122

There is another shrine dedicated to Avvai near Thaalakudy. The presiding deity Avvai is enshrined under a Nelli tree and is hence known as Nelliyadi Avvai. The belief is that it was here that the immortal poetess left this mortal world.

There is a traditional story that Avvaiyaar had arranged for a marriage near Aaralvaaimoli to which she invited the Chera, Chola and Paandya Kings. Three separate Pandals were erected there and this event led to the place being called Muppandal. There are remnants of three separate mandapas and a shrine of Avvaiyar in the midst. Two images of Avvaiyaar are enshrined at Muppandal. Muppandal is situated at the entrance to Kanyakumari District. Every vehicle passing that way stop for a few moments to enable the passengers to worship the deified poetess.

Unlike other parts of Tamil Naadu the name Avvaiyaar is very common among the members of Thovala taluk irrespective of sex. Sanctified by the association with Avvaiyaar together with the three shrines dedicated to her, the district of Kanyakumari can claim that there is no other place in Tamil Naadu so closely connected with Avvaiyaar.

## SANGHAM PERIOD

The close contact of Agasthiyar, Tholkaappiyar, Tiruvalluvar and Avvaiyaar with Kanyakumari District leads us to think that this piece of land might have produced several poets during the Sangham period. But among the Sanghampoets only one poet named Oru Chirai Periyanaar claims that he belonged to Naanjilnaadu and remarked that he knew no other ruler except Naanjil Porunan:[1] He has written two more poems one

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1. புறம் 137

in Kurunthogai[1] and another in Natrinai.[2] The poets Marungur Kilar Kannanaar.[3] Marungur Pattinathu Senthan Kumaranaar[4] and Marungur Paagai Saathan Poothanaar[5] belong to Marungur in Kanyakumari District. The names Chenthan, Kumarayya and Saathan are very common in Marungur area. There is a village named Senthanputhur near Marungur and a temple of Senthanaar at Alagiapaandipuram

Near Alagiapaandipuram is Bhuthapaandi. We find in Sangham literature a King who was called Ollaiyur thantha Bhuthapaandiyan or Bhuthapaandiyan who conquerred Ollaiyur. The King was himself a Poet. Two of his verses are found in the Tamil Anthologies, one in Puranaanuru[6] and another in Ahanaanuru[7] The monarch's queen Perum Kopendu was also a poetess. One of her verses is found in Puranaanuru.[8]

The author of Malaipadukadaam, Perumkuntrur Perum Kausikanaar belongs to Eraniel Muttam. It must be the coastal village Muttam near Eraniel in Kanyakumari District. His fine description of the natural scenes in Malai Padu Kadaam immediately brings us to the natural surroundings of Velimalai near Eraniel. The word "Kayanthalai"[9] (young one) used by Kausikanaar is vogue only in Kanyakumari District even today.

Urudrang Kannanaar, the author of Perumpaanatrupadai and Pattinappaalai belongs to Kadiyalur.

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1. குறுந்தொகை 272
2. நற்றிணை 121
3. அகம் 80
4. நற்றிணை 289
5. அகம் 327
6. புறம் 71
7. அகம் 25
8. புறம் 42
9. கயந்தலை மடப்பிடி —மலைபடுகடாம் வரி 307

There is no place named Kadiyalur in Tamil Naadu. But there is a village Kaviyalur near Vaal Vacha Koshtam (Vaal Vaittha Kottam) in Kanyakumari District. Kadiyalur might have been renamed as Kaviyalur in memory of the poet. It is an important fact to be noted here that Kanyakumari is the home of Villuppaattu and the musical instrument 'Vil' used for it is mentioned only in Perumpaanaatru Padai in the Sangham literature.[1]

It is also interesting to note that several words which were used during the Sangham and post Sangham periods of Tamil literature are commonly used only in Kanyakumari District even at present. They are Sulaku[2] (winnow) Kadunjsool[3] (pregnancy nearing confinement) Unangal[4] (to dry), Savatti[5] (to tread on), Seethai[6] (bad) Musithal[7] (crumpled), Vaalaamai[8] (pollution due to child birth) and Koovili[9] (loud noise). These are only a few among the several words. The Tamil scholars should come forward to collect these old words which are obsolete in the rest of Tamil Naadu

## JAINISM

Coming to the religious history of Kanyakumari we come to understand that Jainism had a complete sway over the whole of Kanyakumari district between 7th and 9th centuries A.D. The erudite scholars and

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1. ................ ...... ... "குமிழின்
புழற்கோட்டுத் தொடுத்த மரற்புரி நரம்பின்.
வில்யாழிசைக்கும் விரலெறி குறிஞ்சி"
—பெரும்பாணாற்றுப்படை (180-182)

2. அகம் 393
3. அகம 304
4. புறம் 321
5. அகம் 375
6. கலித்தொகை மருதம் 29
7. கலித்தொகை, மருதம் 31
8. சிலப்பதிகாரம் 15 24
9. மணிமேகலை, 7, 67.

their disciples from the four Jain centres of learning namely Kottar, Kurandi, Tiruchcharanathu malai and Tirunandikkarai left votive images cut on the rocks in different centres of Jain culture.[1] Most of the scholars and their disciples of Tiruchcharanathumalai were ladies.[2] The literary works of this period are not traceable. But the names of Kunaveera Pandithan, the author of Neminaatham and one Kamalavaahana Pandithan are mentioned in one of the inscriptions found in the Nagaraja temple at Nagercoil.[3]

## SAIVISM

In Tamil Naadu the centuries from the 7th saw the evolution of the saints in both Saivism and Vaishnavism who sang devotional hymns which have been collected into the canons of the respective systems. The Saiva Canon consists of twelve books known as Panniru Thirumuraikal and the Vaishnava canon is called Nalaayira Divya Prabandam.

Kanyakumari has contributed two authors to the Saiva Canon. Venaattuadigal, one of the authors of Thiruvisaippa, the ninth Thirumurai belongs to Venad, the nucleus of Kanyakumari district.[4] Ilamperumaan Adigal, one of the authors of the eleventh Thirumurai was a native of Kottar. His name and a poem written by him in praise of the King Perum pidugu Mutharayan of the 8th century A. D. are inscribed in the Siva temple at Chenthalai near Tiruchirapalli.[5]

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1. South Indian Inscriptions Volume V Nos. 313-390
Samanamalai Inscriptions—Edited by Venkayya
List of Antiquities—Dr. R Sewell Page 120
2 South Indian Inscriptions Volume V Page 123.
3 T. A. S. Volume VI page 163
4. Some aspects of Kerala and Tamil literature —M Raghava Aiyengar, Page 48
5. செந்தமிழ் தொகுதி 6, பக்கம் 6—12

Sivagnana Swamigal of the 18th century who wrote several works in Saiva Siddhantha Philosophy and commentaries to Sivagnana Bodham and Sivagnana Sithiar was the disciple of Velappa Desigar of Esana Mutt at Suchindrum in Kanyakumari district.[1]

## VAISHNAVISM

Among the twelve Alwars of Vaishnavites Nammaalwaar is the last but the foremost. He is considered to be the avathaar of Lord Vishnu. Vaishnavites claim that Nammaalwaar was born at Appancoil near Alwar Tirunagari in Tirunelveli District. But there is ample evidence to prove that he was born at Tirupathisaaram otherwise known as Tiruvanparisaaram in Kanyakumari District.

Udayanangai, the mother of Nammaalwaar belonged to Tiruppathisaaram. She married Kaariyaar of Kurugur (the present Alwar Tirunagari). According to the custom of Vellalas she gave birth the first child at Tiruppathisaraam. He was none other than Nammalwar. There was a custom in the temple ot Alwar Tirunagari that a person was deputed to Tirupathisaaram to bring the soil therefrom. The festival of the temple commenced only after depositing the soil of Tirupathisaaram at the base of the flag-staff. From this fact it can be surmised that Nammaalwar belongs to the soil of Tirupathisaaram. That is why Nammalwaar claims that the deity of Tirupathisaaram as his own.[2] The word "Orupaadu" used by Nammaalwar is in vogue only in Kanyakumari District even today. There is a small shrine of Nammalwaar behind the temple of Tiruvaalimaarbar at Tirupathisaaram where he was born. The poems of Nammalwaar are known among the Vaishnavites as the fifth Veda. Thus the

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1. கலைக் களஞ்சியம் தொகுதி 4, பக்கம் 706

2. "என் திருவாழிமார்பர்"—திருவாய்மொழி 8 —4.

contribution of Kanyakumari to the Saivite and Vaishnavite philosophies is substantial and significant but the fact is unknown to the Tamil World.

## ISLAM

Islam has made a substantial contribution to the literary heritage of Kanyakumari district. Aalipulavar, a Muslim poet wrote "Mihraajumaalai" and released it in the Vambadi Palli at Edalakudy in the year 1585 A. D. The author himself has mentioned that his work was written in the Kollam Era 760.[1] This was the first work of Islamic literature in Tamil.

Peer Mohamed Saahib of the 17th century A.D. gave to the Tamil World several philosophical works like Gnanapukaltchi, Gnanamanimaalai, Gnanapoottu and Gnana Rathina Kuravanchi. He wrote 18000 poems[2] and used the words Siva and Sakthi in several places. The poems of Gnanapukaltchi are sung during the festival days in the Dargha at Thuckalay. Sheik Mohideen Maluk Mudaliar locally known as Gnaniar of Kottar was a mystic poet during the 18th century. His verses are sung at Melapaalayam for a fortnight during the festival days.[3] In the 18th century there was another Muslim poet named Kunju Moosu Pillai at Thengappattinam who wrote a war ballad in Tamil "Seyyad".[4]

## CHRISTIANITY

The advent of Protestant Christians in Kanyakumari district played an important role in the field of Journalism in Tamil. A quarterly magazine for

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1. மிஃருஜுமாலை பாடல் 19.
2. "உரைத்தேன் பதினெண்ணுயிரம் கவி" — பீர்முகமது அப்பா.
3. மஞ்சரி மே, 1979
4. இலக்கியப்பேழை — கே பி எஸ் ஹமீது —பக்கம் 116

children named "Baala Deepikai" in Tamil was started by them at Nagercoil in the year 1840.[1] This was the first magazine for children in Tamil Nadu. In the year 1861 a monthly named "Desopakaari" was started by the London Mission Society and it is still published by the Kanyakumari Diocese. "Travancore Abhimaani", a daily in Tamil was started by D. C. Joseph in the year 1874.[2] It was the first daily in Tamil in the whole of India.

## MYSTIC POET

Mutthukutty Swamigal, a mystic of Kanyakumari wrote a poetic work named "Akila Thirattu" containing puranic incidents and prophecies. During the festival days the verses of Akila Thirattu are sung in the temple at Swamithoppu.

## PALLU

During the eighteenth century there appears a kind of literary work in Tamil about and for the common people. It is called 'Pallu', a combination of dramatic element and musical style. During that period "Shanbagaraaman Pallu" was written by a Christian Poet of Kanyakumari whose name was not known. It reflects the life of the Bharathava Community during the period and gives a comprehensive realistic picture of the village Kovalam near Kanyakumari. The work was first published in a book form from the palm leaf records by M. J. Kalingarayan in 1142 A. D.

## TRADITIONAL SCHOLARS

## PAAVALAR

There were several traditional scholars in Kanyakumari District. A majority of them were from

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1. தமிழ் இதழ்கள் (1975) —சோமலெ (பிற் சேர்க்கை XIII)
2. சேர நாடும் செந்தமிழும் (1970)
—வித்துவான் செ. சதாசிவம் பக்கம் 193

Kottar. Sadavadaani Sheik Thampi Paavalar who was a doyen among the Tamil Scholars of his period, stands first in the line. (Sadavadaani means a person skilled in attending to numerous things at a time). He was a disciple of Sankaranaarayana Pattaariar, a Tamil Scholar in Kottar. Paavalar proved that religion does not bar the language. He was an authority on Kamba Ramayana. He was so brilliant that at his 15th year he had become a master of Tamil language. He wrote several books in Tamil. Among them Tirukkottatru Pathitrupatthu Anthaathi, Tirunaagoor Tiruvanthaathi are most important. He wrote commentaries on Seerapuranam which contains 5027 poems.

Paavalar wrote and spoke on the high ideals of Sri Ramalinga Swamigal and argued that his poems were Arutppa and not Marutpa as advocated by Kadiresa Pillai, one of the intellectual giants in Tamil Naadu. It is interesting to note that Thiru Vi. Ka. was a member of the opposition group and Maraimalai Adigal was in the group of our Paavalar. Finally the view of Paavalar was crowned with success. For this victory he was awarded several titles like Devamirtha Prasanka Kalanchiyam and was honoured with Poornakumbam at Kancheepuram Temple.[1]

Sasthankutty Pillai of Thengamputhur was the chief disciple of Paavalar. He has not written any book. But he had several disciples who are outstanding scholars of Kanyakumari at present. Among them Vidvan Sadasivam Pillai, the author of "Chera Naadum Senthamilum" is well-known.

Among the other disciples of Paavalar Manickavasagam Pillai, the author of "Isai mani maalai" containing more than 100 songs with musical notes and

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1. சதாவதானி செய்குதம்பிப் பாவலர் நினைவு மலர் (1961) பக்கம் 19

Haridaas Vaaythiriyaar, the editor of "Nallarkku Nanban" a literary monthly in Tamil were famous.

Kanthapurana Kirthanaas written by Neelakanta Aasaari of Kottar and Chaankia Sutram by his son Ganapathi Aasaari were released in the Subramonia temple at Tiruchendur in the year 1889. Chaanakiya Sutram contains 4500 poems. One Desikavinayaakam Pillai of Kottar wrote "Lalitha puranam" during this period.

## K. N. SIVARAJA PILLAI

The contribution of K. N. Sivaraja Pillai of Kottar occupies a prominent place in Tamil literature. He was the first director of Tamil Research Centre which was started at Madras in the year 1927. He had edited one monthly in Tamil named "Nanjil Nesan" at Trivandrum. At the request of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan he went to Ceylon and published Kamba Ramayana. Based on the Synchronistic tables of the Kings, Chieftains and poets appearing in the Sangham literature he wrote a book "The Chronology of Early Tamils". It was published by the University of Madras in 1932. His other works are Agasthiya in the Tamil land, The antiquity of Puranaanuru, Nanjil Venba and Mehamaalai. Several of his research works were not published. His introduction to Manonmaniyam is a fine piece of critical study. He was the pioneer in the field of Research in Tamil.

## K. N. KUMARESA PILLAI

K. N. Kumaresa Pillai, the brother of Sivaraja Pillai was the pioneer in the field of propagating the fame of Kamban. He gave discourses on Kamba Ramayana in every nook and corner of Kanyakumari District. Following the musical recitation of Kamba Ramayana by his assistant Paramathilingam Pillai, Kumaresa Pillai rendered the commentaries. It is a

traditional method of narration prevalent in Kanyakumari District, the origin of which is not traceable. This peculiar kind of discourse on Kamba Ramayana cannot be seen anywhere else. At present Kalliankaad Ramachandra Pillai is an exponent on Kamba Ramayana in the traditional method of narration.

## P. CHIDAMBARAM PILLAI

P. Chidambaram Pillai of Nagercoil has rendered great service to Tamil literature by publishing the famous Mudaliar palm leaf records in the year 1930. It describes the history of Naanjil naadu for a short period. He wrote two books in English "Temple Entry" and "Aryans and Dravidians" and edited a periodical in Tamil named "Thamilan".

Panditha Muthuswamy Pillai of Kanyakumari has published one periodical named "Thamilan" at Trivandrum in 1922. He has also edited "Viduthalai" of Periyar E. V. R. Dasavathanam Arumugham Pillai, a disciple of Paavalar was another Tamil scholar in Kanyakumari. His important works were Kusela Venba and Cheramandala Sathkam. Kavignar Aathimoolam otherwise known as Kavimonithasan wrote several poems. But two books "Chentamil Cholai" and "Marungoor Nanmanimaalai" were published in book form. He was the disciple of Kavimony.

Thondarkulam Maha Vidwan Arumugha Naavalar occupied a unique place in the religious field. He has founded at Nagercoil a religious organisation named "Tiruneri Thondarkulam" in the year 1928 and several branches were established in different parts of Tamil Naadu. Through this organisation he preached Thevaram, Tiruvaasagam and Tiruppugal to the common people. He went to Ceylon and became very popular in the Tamil speaking area. His "Hindu Matha Vilakkam" is a fine work on the basic principles of Hindu Philosophy. He had also edited one religious monthly "Thondan".

## KAVIMONY

Kavimony Desikavinayam Pillai has contributed quite a substantial volume to the growth of Tamil literature Standing right in the centre of the Tamil Poetic tradition and uttering the noble thoughts in simple and sweet words Kavimony occupied a unique place in the Tamil literary world. His poetical collection "Malarum Maalaiyum" is an outstanding contribution to modern Tamil literature. He is remembered for ever by some of his beautiful and simple lines like "Thottathil Meyuthu Vellai Pasu " and" Veyyirkketra Nilalundu . ". His translations and adaptations from western languages look almost original. He brings Omarkayyam to the surroundings of Tamil Naadu.

Poets according to Kavimony are not mere dreamers of dreams but the architects of society. His contribution "Marumakkal Vali Maanmiyam" is an excellent satire in modern Tamil literature. The language of the work is so powerful and sarcastic that the system Marumakkal thaayam (matriarchal system of inheritance) among the Vellalas of Naanjil naadu was legally abolished. This is a pioneer work in Tamil literature which has revolutionised the society.

Kavimony was a Research scholar and a clever archaeologist. "Kaandalur Saalai" is a reputed research work of Kavimony. His interpretation of the phrase "Kalamarutharuli" attracted the attention of all the experts in Archaeology during his period. The earlier archaeologists gave the meaning of the pharse "*Kalamaruthuaruli*" thus. "The king was pleased to destroy the ship at the roadstead of Kandalur". According to Kavimony the word "Aruthu" is but a shortened form of "Varai aruthu". On this basis he gave a different meaning for the pharse. "The king was pleased to make an endownment and fix the number of Kalams ie. literally, the number of

dinner plates) and hence the number of persons to be fed in the institution of "Kaandalur" Kavimony's verdict thus created a mile-stone in the field of Archaeology.

## T. K. S. BROTHERS

The contribution of Muthamil Kalaa Vittuva Ratna T. K. S. Brothers of Nagercoil in the Dramatic field is significant, for, they rescued and resurrected the dramatic art and theatre, one among the Muthamils (Tripartite divisions of Tamil). The dramas Raja Raja Cholan and Avvaiyaar are their masterpieces. "The history of Tamil Drama" by T. K. Shanmugham is an outstanding work on Dramatic Art in Tamil literature. It is a compilation of three lectures delivered by him in the Annamalai University.

## N. S. KRISHNAN

Kalaivaanar N. S. Krishnan is the asset of Kanyakumari. "Laugh when you meet misfortune. There is nothing like this to overcome it and pass on to victory" says Tiruvalluvar. On the basis of th's maxim Kalaivaanar lived and made his audience to follow the maxim. There is no written contribution of Kalaivaanar to the Tamil world, but his contribution to the Tamil populace cannot be forgotten. He has occupied the mind of everybody in Tamil Naadu. Kalaivaanar has utilised Cinema as a medium of instruction to rectify the evils of society.

## JEEVAANANDAM

Jeevaanandam of Bhoothapandi popularly known as Jeevaa, a vetern political leader has written several books in Tamil on politics and literature like Kalaiyum Ilakkiyamum, Bharathi Vali, Mathamum Manitha Vaalvum. His lectures on Kamban and Bharathi

were very famous. He was the first man who went to jail for writing a book in Tamil on Bhagavat Singh.

## Dr. K. K. PILLAY

Among the living scholars of Kanyakumari Dr. K. K. Pillay and Dr. B. Natarajan immediately come to our mind. Dr. K. K. Pillay, an authority in South Indian history belongs to Aloor in Kanyakumari District. His monograph on Suchindrum temple is a monumental work which touches the cultural, social and spiritual history of Naanjil Naadu. His contribution to the Tamil world is significant, for, he has written an authorative history of South India in Tamil.

## Dr. B. NATARAJAN

Dr. B. Natarajan, an internationally reputed Economist has contributed substantially to our Tamil literature and Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. The greatest of his achievements is that he has translated Tirumandiram of Tirumoolar into English. He has thus conveyed the message of Tamil Naadu to the west.

Panditha Ramasubramania Naavalar of Nagercoil has written several poetical works. Among them Arul Manimaalai, Venba Pathitru patthu and Naanjil Naadu are important. The well known scholar and a master of several languages K. Appadurai belongs to Aaralvaaimoli. He has written several books on Tamil literature and history. His outstanding works are Kumari Kandam and Thennattu Porkalankal. Tamil perum pulavar Abraham Arulappanar of Nagercoil has written Tholkappiya Yaappu and commentaries to Tiruvaasakam and Tirumurugatrupadai.

In the linguistic field Kanyakumari has produced three International authorities Dr. V. I. Subramoniam, Dr. S. Agasthilingam and Dr. Muthu Shanmuganaar.

They have written several outstanding works on Linguistics.

## PRESENT DAY TAMIL LITERATURE

Let us have a cursory glance at the present day literature of Tamil Naadu. To the present day literature also Kanyakumari has contributed a major share. There are several poets, short-story writers, novelists, dramatists and journalists in Kanyakumari District. Among them Sundara Ramaswamy, Neela Padmanabhan, Ponnelan, Nanjil naadan, N.A. Velayudham, The. Pa. Perumal, Hepziba Jesudasan and Isaac Arumai Rajan are well known to the Tamil readers. Their contributions are noteworthy. Here special mention may be made of Sundara Ramaswamy's Puliamarathin Kathai, Neela Padmanabhan's Thalaimuraigal, Ponneelan's Karisal and Naanjil Naadan's Thalaikeel Vigithangal. During a short span of his life Krishnan Nambi, a young writer wrote two outstanding works. "Yaanai Enna Yaanai", a collection of poems for children and "Neelakkadal" a collection of short stories.

The contributions of Dr. P. Arunachalam, Dr. S. Subramaniam, Dr. A. N. Perumal, Dr. M. Ilayaperumal, Dr. D. Andiappan, Professor Veerabadran, Professor C. Jesudasan and Vidwan Shanmugham Pillai are of scholarly nature. Among the poets of Kanyakumari Vidwan Umathanu Pillai, Kavignar Kuttalam and Kumari Amudan are most famous.

## JOURNALISM

In the field of Journalism the contribution of Kanyakumari in the early period was significant. We have already seen that the first Tamil daily in India and the first magazine for children came from Kanyakumari. Although there are numerous writers and journalists in the district no outstanding journal

comes from Kanyakumari at present. Several periodicals like Tamilan, Devi, Naanjil, Sathangai, Tamil aruvi, Kanni, Kumari, Puthumai, Sudar, Tamilarasu and Ulavan came from Kanyakumari. Among them "Tamilan" edited by P. Chidambaram Pillai, "Devi" by P. Mahalinga Mudaliar and "Sathangai" by Vanamaligai were noteworthy. They have published several literary articles and stories in their magazines. Devi was very popular among the readers of Kanyakumari. N. A. Velayudham's "Theeviravaathi", Arjunan's "Thenkural", Sivasubramoniam's "Kavi Amudu" Bhoothai Annamalai's "Kaivilakku" and P. S. Mony's "Kanyakumari" are the present periodicals of the district. With great difficulties they are publishing their journals. T. V. Ramasubbiar, the Editor of "Dinamalar", one of the leading dailies of Tamil Naadu and M. R. Krishnan, the Editor of "Vanchinaadu" the only Tamil weekly in Kerala hail from Kanyakumari.

Thus we have seen the contribution of Kanyakumari to the Tamil language and literature from the ancient period to the present day in a nut-shell.

## KOTTAR, THE METROPOLIS

Now let us consider the cultural heritage of Kanyakumari. The cultural heritage of Kanyakumari District can be understood by going through the history of Kottar, the metropolis of ancient Tamil Naadu and the historical temples in the area. The history of Kottar which provides a fund of information gives us a clear perspective into the historic past. Kottar, now a part of Nagercoil Municipality was a commercial centre of fame in days of yore. Ptolemy's Geography and Pliny's Travels clearly indicate that it was one of the most important cities during the begining of the Christian era.

From the description of Kottar given in Thevaaram of Tirugnana Sambandar it is learnt that Kottar was a great seat of art, culture, civilisation and

pilgrimage.[1] The main occupation of the people was Agriculture. So it is no wonder that the fertile piece of land was named Naanjil Naadu, the land of ploughshare. Spinning cotton was an occupation of women and even silk was woven there. Sambandar aptly describes Kottar as "the city of Industries".[2] Even today Kottar is reputed for its artificial silk and Vadasery located to the north of Kottar is famous for its weaving industry.

Kottar was inhabited by men and women of noble descent. It was a perfect city and presented a beautiful appearance. There were many bazaars at Kottar selling various goods. The main commodities of trade were ivory, teak, rose wood, salt, pepper etc. The river Palayaar might have been used as an inland waterway and in all probability Muttam, Colachel, Kadigaipattinam and Kanyakumari might have been served as sea ports. They were busy centres of maritime activities in ancient days. Even now the bazaar ot Kottar is famous for trade and it is locally called *Pandaka salai* and *Koolakadai.*

The trade and commerce dominated on one side of the river Palayaar. On the other side, there was Sanghams or assemblies of scholars. The place Puravaseri on the eastern side of the river is only a corruptive form of Pulavar Seri which means the assembly of scholars. There is epigraphic evidence that land was given to two teachers at Puravaseri for expounding Vedas.[3] There were also several Jain Scholars named Putbananda Adigal, Uttananda Adigal, Vimalachandrar and Paathamoolathaan Aranganmaaran who had prefixed the word Kottar to their names.[4] Sambandar

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1. திருக்கோட்டாற்றுப் பதிகங்கள்.
2. "தொழில்மல்கு கோட்டாறு" —திருக்கோட்டாற்றுப்பதிகங்கள் 43:6
3. T. A. S. Volume VII, Page 53
4. South Indian Inscriptions Volume V Page 122-132.

has also described the naked Jain monks roaming in the streets of Kottar.[1] There is clear evidence to show that the temple of Nagaraja at Nagercoil is of purely Jain origin.[2]

The city had a number of lofty and palatial buildings beautified with multi-coloured flags. The place was surrounded by a vast expanse of Paddy fields, beautiful flower gardens and wavy coconut groves, pleasing to the eyes of the visitors. That all types of music and musical instruments were popular in the city is evident from the poetical illustration of Sambandar. The city containing charming dancers, craftsmen with artistic talents and clever magicians was a heaven to the visitors. Thus a graphic picture of life in Kottar is given in Thevaaram. This description is supplemented by the words of a Carmelite Monk Fr. Bartholomew of the 18th century who mentions that"... this city, of considerable trade, is upward of 2000 years old, and much frequented by merchants from the island of Ceylon, the provinces of Madura, Tanjore and the coast of Coramandal. A river which flows through the middle of it, divides it into two parts. It contains abundance of merchandise; and is inhabited by a great number of weavers, money changers, silver-smiths, jugglers, comedians, quacks, dancing girls, conjurers and black artists.[3] Even now we can see in the Alagamman Temple at Vadiveeswaram near Kottar, the image of a juggler facing upward, balances an inverted short dagger at the tip of his nose and also a rotating saucer on the uplifted fore-finger of his right hand while his animated left hand and left foot are playing the popular

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1. "உடையிலா துழல்கின்ற குண்டர்கள்"
— திருக்கோட்டாற்றுப் பதிகங்கள் 43: 55
2. நாகராஜர் ஆலயம்—எஸ். பத்மநாபன் பக்கம் 14
3. Travancore State Manual—T. K. Velu Pillay
Volume IV page 633

game of ammanai with two balls. In another pillar one juggler stands in a balancing pose with his right foot on a stick vertically placed on the back of a pig.

There is epigraphic and literary evidence to show that Kottar, the flourishing city of Naanjil Naadu attracted almost all the dynasties of South India. In the words of Dr. K. K. Pillay "Commencing from the days of the early Paandyas. Kottar, the metropolis became the cock-pit of the South".[1] Kottar has served as a strategic base for the early rulers. From Paandikkovai we learn that the city was once surrounded by a gigantic fort and it was captured by the Paandya king Arikesari Maaravarman, the contemporary of Sambandar.[2]

Sanctified by the inspiring verses of the Saivite Saint Tirugnanasambandar and ruled by the Kings of different dynasties, Kottar one of the cities of ancient Tamil Naadu stands as an embodiment of different religions Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam and it continues to be a dynamic centre of trade.

## TEMPLE CULTURE

Now let us consider the contribution of Kanyakumari to the temple Culture of Tamil Naadu. Tamil Naadu is a land of Temples. As in other parts of Tamil Naadu Kanyakumari is having numerous temples of legendary, historical and artistic importance. But except the temples at Kanyakumari and Suchindrum all others are unknown to the outsiders.

The Nagaraja temple of Chera style, the Cholaraajakoil of Chola structure and the Suchindrum temple of Paandya architecture reveal the fact that

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1. Suchindrum Temple—Dr. K.K. Pillay Page 263.
2. பாண்டிக் கோவை பாடல் 36

the rulers of Chera, Chola and Paandya Kingdoms poured into the rich plains of Naanjil Naadu and left their memorabilia in the district. There is also evidence to show that the Vijayanagar Chieftains and Nayak rulers have also had their share in the reconstruction of the temples in Kanyakumari. Thus almost all the leading dynasties of South India have had their share in the construction of temples in Kanyakumari District.

The only shrine dedicated to Trinity is Sthanumalaya's at Suchindrum. Sthanu is a synonym for Siva, Maal for Vishnu and Ayan for Brahma. The temple is noted for its exquisite, workmanship in stone. The marvellous sculptural skill can be seen in the musical pillars cut out of a single block of granite stone which produce sounds of different musical instruments. The colossal monolithic image of Anjaneya of a height of 18 feet is an outstanding work of art. There is an image of Thirumal Nayak at Suchindrum. The formation of the nostrils is done so skilfully in the image that the cavity of each nostril extends to the ear on its side and the holes of the ears are also connected. Thus the temple may be considered as one of the treasure houses of the richest specimens of art in stone.

The temple of Nagaraja at Nagercoil unifies the four streams of Indian religion. Besides Siva and Vishnu there are several Jain images in the temple. The beautiful main gate way of the temple reminds us of the Buddhist monastery. Thus the temple of Nagaraja stands as an embodiment of the four creeds Saivism. Vishnavism, Jainism and finally Buddhism.

The Adikesavaperumal temple at Tiruvattar is famous for its fine workmanship in stone and wood, the striking example among them being a huge piece of granite slab measuring 18 feet square and 3 feet in thickness cut out of a rock, placed in front of

the main idol. It is called Ottakkal Mandapa, the construction of which is a great achievement in the field of structural engineering. The wooden ceiling of Udayamaarthanda Mandapa is profusely carved with beautiful figures and it is regarded as a remarkable example of the artistic genius of the period.

The story of Ramayana has been depicted dramatically on 45 wooden panels in the Ramaswamy temple at Padmanabhapuram, once the capital of Venaad rulers. It is one of the best specimens of wood art in the whole of India.

There is a temple of Vishnu at Parthivasekharapuram. One of the copper plates dated 866 A. D, informs us that Kokkarunandakkan of Aay dynasty consecrated a temple and established there a college for vedic studies in which arrangements were made to give free boarding, lodging and tuition fees to 90 students. They have imparted advanced courses of study both in theory and practice and in the administration of the country both in the civil and military branches.[1] In the institution the martial arts were taught to the students by the masters of Kalari Payittu.

Among the temples built in the modern period, the memorial of Swami Vivekananda on the sea-girt rock at Kanyakumari ranks first. The majestic monument which is an embodiment of different styles of architecture including Pallava and Chola stands as a fitting testimony to the traditional architectural genius of Tamil Naadu.

## ART

We have evidence to show that in Kanyakumari District the Art of Dance, Music and Paintings were preserved in the Temples. Several dancers known as Devadasis were attached to the temple of Sthanumalaya

1. தென்னிந்திய கோயில் சாசனங்கள் பாகம் 3 பகுதி 2 பக்கம் 6

at Suchindrum as in Thanjavur. They could also sing and play on a variety of musical instruments. Their performances were also held in the temple at Trivandrum during Navaraathri festivals. Many folk dances like Kummi, Kolaattam, Kaavadiaattam, Mayila-attam, Poykaal Kuthirai Aattam, Kaniaan Aattam, Aali Aattam and Kumbaattam are in vogue in Kanyakumari District even today. They are staged in all social and temple festivals. The puppet shows were also performed in the temple festivals. Gopala Rao of Kottaram and Chelliah Nadar of Elusaattuppatthu were experts on this dramatic art.

Kanyakumari District encouraged the art of painting in ancient days. The old mural paintings are found on the walls of the rock-cut cave temple at Tirunandikkarai, the structural temple at Suchindrum and the palace at Padmanabhapuram. The main ingredient of the paint used during the period was only the leaves of certain plants.

## VILLUPPAATTU (BOW-SONG)

Villuppaattu is a famous folk-art in the southern parts of Tamil Naadu. The people of Kanyakumari saved the ancient art from the ravages of modern civilization. In Kanyakumari there are several bow-songs in palm leaf records. A few of them were published by Arumugha Perumal Nadar of Agastheeswaram. In the year 1795 a bow-song named "The Victory of the Dewan" was written by Tiruanandam Pillai of Shenbagaraamanputhur[1]. It describes the victory of Raja Kesavadaas in the war between the Maharaaja of Travancore and Tippu Sultan of Mysore in the year 1790. Osaravilai Appaavu Nadar of 19th century and Punnakulam Kolappa Pillai, Thovalai Sundaram Pillai and

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1. சேரநாடும் செந்தமிழும் (1956)
—வித்துவான். செ. சதாசிவம் பக்கம் 184

Maatthivilai Ponnumuthu Aasaan of 20th century were the exponents on Villupaattu in the district. Even ladies used to play Villupaatu there. Kalaivaanar N. S. Krishnan has introduced Villupaattu to other parts of Tamil Naadu. His Villuppaattu on "Mahatma Gandhi" has earned a popularity still unmatched. The works of Dr. T. Natarajan in the field of Villuppaattu and folk tales are commendable.

## MEDICAL SCIENCE AND ALLIED ART

The medical science of the Tamils evolved during the Sangham period was known as "Siddha Vaidyam". There are numerous palm leaf records on Siddha Vaidyam in Kanyakumari District. Kanyakumari is not only a home of Siddha Vaidyam but also the birth place of Varmam, the science of bones and nerves in Siddha Vaidyam. Even the women members in Kalkulam and Vilavankodu Taluks know the science of Varmam. Several books like "Varmani" and "Varma Sutra" were written by Aasaans of Kanyakumari. They are in Palm leaf records.

Kalaripayittu which includes Silampam (fighting with sticks ) Katthikutthu (fighting with knives) and Varma pidi (the art of striking at vulnerable parts of the body) are unique pugilistic feats of the district. Karathe is said to be a modernised form of this martial art.

## SCULPTURAL ART

Kanyakumari is famous for its sculptural art. Indian sculptural forms are poetic utterances in stone, wood, metal or lime. In Kanyakumari there are experts in making images in all the four mediums. The artisans of Mylaudy are specially reputed for their skill in making stone images. They have developed a unique tradition. They still hold a high place in the artistic field of Tamil Naadu.

## ARCHITECTURE

Besides the builders of temples there were builders of forts and fortresses in Kanyakumari District in ancient days. The remnants of a fort from Kadukkarai to Kanyakumari with a length of more than 20 miles can be seen even today. Vattakkottai on the shore of Kanyakumari was utilised as a defensive structure to save the country from the naval invaders. Udayagiri, a fortified hill was of great strategic importance during the period of the Chola King Raja Raja I. Padmanabhapuram, the old capital of Venaadu rulers is surrounded by a square fortfication of stone about 2½ miles perimeter The Palace at Padmanabhapuram which occupies the centre of the fort, is a complex of many structures built at various times. The forts and the palace in Kanyakumari District testify to the strategic glory of the mighty Tamil rulers and to the engineering skill of the builders of the period. Such proficiency in all arts and architecture elevates Kanyakumari to a height of glory in the cultural field of the Tamil World.

The facts I have given here are collected from the available sources. If the history of Kanyakumari is approached with an unbiased outlook certainly it will throw light on thousands and thousands of years of human history and of our ancient literary and cultural heritage. My long and cherished desire will be fulfilled if the historians and Research Scholars turn their attention to the side of Kanyakumari, the ancient but a neglected part of the land and rewrite a comprehensive survey of her history particularly in the literary and cultural field.

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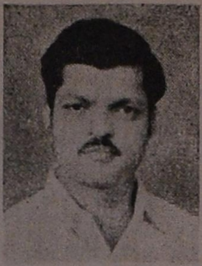

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*    *    *

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